



The story of

THE THIRTEENTH BATTALION

*The Royal Highlanders
of Canada*



PRICE SIXPENCE NET

BOOK
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The
STORY OF THE
THIRTEENTH BATTALION
1914 - 1917

By
STUART MARTIN.

(This series of histories is written under the direction of and edited
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Brig.-Gen. F. O. W. LOOMIS, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

The Story of the 13th Battalion.

BATTALION COMMANDERS.

Brig.-Gen. F. O. W. LOOMIS, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.,
Commanded till 31st December, 1915.

Lieut.-Col. V. C. BUCHANAN,
Commanded till 25th September, 1916.

Lieut.-Col. G. E. McCUAIG, D.S.O.,
Commanded till 5th December, 1917.

ENGAGEMENTS.

Ypres, April, 1915; Festubert, May, 1915; Sanctuary Wood, June, 1916;
Somme, September and October, 1916; Vimy Ridge, April, 1917;
Lens, August, 1917.

BEFORE the war the Fifth Royal Highlanders of Canada were affiliated with the Black Watch. On the outbreak of hostilities a battalion of the Fifth was mobilised at Montreal in August, 1914. By the 25th of the month 1,004 recruits had been accepted, and on that day the battalion entrained for Valcartier. Here, when a division for overseas was being organised, the battalion became the 13th Canadian Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada.

On the 25th of September the battalion moved to Quebec and sailed for England on the troopship *Alaunia*, arriving there on October 16th. The winter months were spent in more training, and on the 10th of February, 1915, baggage was packed once more and the journey to France resumed. St. Nazaire was reached on the 16th. Four days later the battalion was inspected by Field-Marshal Lord French, after which a march was made to Armentieres. On the 24th the battalion companies went into the trenches for the first time, relieving the Buffs.

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For some little time the 13th was attached to the 16th (British) Brigade, doing the ordinary routine of trench work. It was not until the 16th of April, when they moved to the village of St. Jean, near St. Julien, that the men knew they were due to come into close contact with the enemy. Though the front in the vicinity of the battalion was quiet there was evidence of severe fighting all around. They were soon to experience the surprise and shock of the second Battle of Ypres.

Throughout the whole day of the 20th April both Canadian and German artillery were active over the entire area. On the evening of the 21st the battalion went into the trenches without casualties in spite of heavy cannonading, but the trenches were found to be in very poor shape, and many unburied dead lay between the lines. It was not until the evening of the 22nd that the German avalanche burst upon them.

The day had been comparatively quiet, but about five o'clock in the evening the enemy artillery began a terrific bombardment, sending over at the same time a great cloud of yellow gas on the front held by the French Turcos on the left of the 13th. This was the first gas attack of the war.

As the Canadians saw the yellow cloud rolling along the ground their first thought was that the Germans were using lyddite prodigally, but soon the real fact became known. The French Turcos were forced to retire, retreating through the village of St. Julien, where they mingled with other troops moving into and stationed in the village. The confusion was considerable, but the worst feature of the retirement was that it left the left flank of the 13th Battalion open to enemy attack. No. 3 Company was called out of reserve to reinforce the line, and one company of the Buffs was also sent in. Major Buchanan took command of the front line.

It became necessary for the left flank of the 3rd Canadian Brigade—of which the 13th Battalion was a unit—to withdraw southward so that the rear and the village of St. Julien were protected. This operation was carried out hurriedly but successfully.

During the entire night the fighting continued intensely, and throughout the next day (the 23rd) the battalion was shelled and gassed almost continuously. On the 24th they were still being shelled, but held the line until 7.30 a.m., when they were forced to retire to G.H.Q. trenches. On the afternoon of the 25th they were relieved and marched to Brayling, where they took over old French reserve trenches in Divisional reserve. The battalion remained in this position, the battle being still in progress, until they re-entered the trenches on the 28th. During this time they suffered many casualties from the severe enemy shelling, but they kept the position until the 30th April, on which day they were ordered to stand-to while British troops made an attack in the neighbourhood. The following day the battalion went into divisional reserve, with headquarters at Vlamertinge, and two days later marched to Bailleul for re-organisation and refitting.

The battle of Ypres had left the entire Canadian army tired and exhausted. Its numbers were shrunken, but its moral was unshaken, and it had the knowledge that Field Marshal French had already told the world that their steadfastness had "saved the situation." But for their tenacity the whole of the 27th and 28th British Divisions would probably have been cut off. Those, however, were days of urgency, and barely a fortnight had passed when the Canadians were again in the thick of the battle.

BATTLE OF FESTUBERT.

Attempts had already been made by the Allies to take the Aubers Ridge, which dominates Lille, but in spite of heroic efforts the hope had not been realised. On May 16th the 13th Battalion, by this time reinforced from England, was in reserve trenches at Quinque Road. The order was received on the 20th from headquarters detailing the part which the battalion was to play in the coming attack, which was to take place that evening at 7.45 o'clock.

The order was to the effect that the 16th Battalion

would assault an orchard which the Germans had put into a state of defence. The 15th Battalion was to attack at a neighbouring point to the right. These attacks were to be made by two companies of each battalion, and on the 16th Battalion gaining its objective the 13th Battalion was to relieve the 16th. During that afternoon the orchard was heavily bombarded by our artillery, the guns roaring up to the minute of the infantry attack.

The 13th Battalion advanced to the positions allotted to it under heavy shelling. In the meantime the 16th Battalion companies, making their advance in daylight, were immediately seen by the Germans entrenched in the orchard, and were subjected to a torrent of machine gun, rifle and shrapnel fire. In spite of the heavy fire they continued steadily to press forward, and reached the orchard, where they found that the bulk of the German garrison had retired, but had collected on the other side of the orchard. These were forced to beat a retreat, and the orchard was cleared.

As soon as the 16th signalled that they had gained their objective the 13th advanced to take up their positions. No. 1 company occupied the position captured by the 16th Battalion, strengthening it in every possible way. Nos. 1, 2 and 3 companies occupied the firing line with No. 4 company in support, and the positions were consolidated during the night. The 16th Battalion companies in the meantime had withdrawn after their swift advance.

During the following day the Germans made an attempt to attack the position in the orchard, but they were driven off by well-directed rifle fire. On the 22nd the battalion was relieved by men of the 1st Canadian Brigade, and moved back to billets in Essars.

On the 5th of July the battalion marched to Ploegsteert Wood—"Plug street," in soldiers' vernacular—where the 1st Battalion was relieved in the support trenches. Four days later the front line was taken over and at nine o'clock on the first evening of this tour in the trenches the engineers exploded two mines, which did considerable damage to the German line.

A party under Captain Perry immediately went forward and occupied the craters, and also consolidated an advance trench in so thorough a manner that though the enemy kept up a persistent bombardment on the position during the whole night, there were no casualties. The following day—the 10th July—the various companies began a systematic and organised plan of sniping. At this period the Germans had become very troublesome with their snipers, and the only way to deal with them was to train special snipers on our side to keep the enemy quiet. So effective was the plan that while the battalion remained in the trenches it did not suffer at all from the enemy snipers, while our men had many hits to their credit.

On the night of the 13th two other mines were exploded. Captain Perry, in charge of No. 1 company, again crept forward to consolidate. While the bombers and riflemen advanced, another party of engineers began to dig a fire trench, hoping to connect it with the advanced trench dug on the night of the 9th. Owing to the intense darkness, however, less work was done than was hoped for, though the position was consolidated and held.

For some time after this tour in the trenches the Battalion was not engaged in any operation of importance, the ordinary round of duties and moves being the orders of the days, though continually there was sniping and harassing of the enemy wherever he was to be found.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS DAY.

The battalion spent its first Christmas on the battlefield in the Steenbeck district. In the evening of Christmas Day two patrols went out under Lieut. MacFarlane and Lieut. Lovett. That under Lieut. MacFarlane left the trenches at 10.30 p.m. and worked northward along Steenbeck, where it struck eastward, reached the enemy wire at Messines-Stinking Farm Road, crossed the road and patrolled all the ground and examined the hedges in the vicinity. For some time the party was quite close to the enemy trenches and could hear a working party

of Germans driving in stakes. The enemy could also be heard talking and walking about, but no sentries were to be seen. While making their observations the Canadians could plainly hear a concert which was being held in billets behind their own lines, even the songs could be recognised, and also a band playing behind our lines. After making their investigations the party returned to their lines without casualties.

The party under Lieut. Lovett had a different experience. There were sixteen men in the party, and they proceeded down a ditch on the north side of Wulverghem—Messines road just after midnight. Leaving a covering party of six men about a hundred yards down the road, the remainder went along in single file. After about an hour's march they were suddenly challenged by a German sentry, and fire was at the same moment opened by the enemy at point blank range. The men of the 13th replied vigorously at once by bombs, revolvers and rifles. The hedge which separated the Germans from the Canadians was at this point about fifteen feet high, so that the enemy could not be seen, but bombs were thrown over the obstruction, and then a position was taken up in a ditch. But hardly had they got into the ditch when a party of Germans who were situated in a ruined house near at hand opened fire on them, though without much success. When the fire died down the groans of German wounded could be heard. Soon the enemy were heard bringing a machine gun into position, and Lieut. Lovett withdrew his men safely. Other patrols were later carried out by Lieut. Lovett in the same vicinity.

On the 1st of January, 1916, Lieut.-Col. F. O. W. Loomis, D.S.O., relinquished his command of the battalion, on taking over a higher appointment, and handed it over to Major V. C. Buchanan. For some months the time was spent in training, when the battalion was out of the trenches, and in patrols and raids when it was in the trenches. There was no action of importance in which the battalion took part until June arrived, and with it the struggles around Mount Sorrel and Sanctuary Wood.

During the first half of the year the Canadians had been moving northward along the straggling battle line of France back towards Ypres, the scene of the first Canadian stand in the great war. The 2nd Division was still down in the mud by St. Eloi, but the 1st and the 3rd divisions had been brought up to the slightly more pleasant, and certainly more intimate, surroundings. The 3rd Division was on the left of the 1st Division, the left of the line being held by the 7th Brigade, and the right by the 8th. Two companies of the Royal Canadian Regiment were astride the Menin Road, towards the ruins of Hooge. On their right they were in touch with the P.P.C.L.I. The trenches here had been partly demolished and were being reconstructed when the German attack swept down.

The storm of German artillery which burst upon the 3rd Division on that morning of the 2nd June was the greatest which the Canadians had yet been called upon to face. It was the concentrated effort of the summer's preparations, for the Germans were then not merely trying to break through a line but endeavouring to obliterate an area.

The 13th Battalion were holding sports on that day in a field adjoining the "Patricias'" lines. Soon after the events had been contested came word that the battalion was to "stand to" and be ready to move at a moment's notice. The Germans, said the report, had broken through the front at Mount Sorrel, and had cut up the battalions in that area. Hard on the heels of the first order came a second for the battalion to go to the support of the 14th Battalion. The 13th at once began a forced march to Zillebeke Etang, but owing to the roads being heavily shelled by the Germans the battalion did not arrive at the position assigned for it until 2 a.m.

To save the men as much as possible, Lieut.-Col. Buchanan ordered them to leave their packs at the side of the road to be picked up by the transport and taken back to the transport lines. In spite of this, however, the men were worn out when they dug themselves in alongside the hedges near Manor House. There they

remained during the night while the heavy enemy shelling kept at an even pitch.

The morning of the 3rd June broke clear and fine. The counter-attack, which had been timed for 2 a.m., could not be carried out owing to several of the battalions being unable to arrive in time, and it was not till 7 a.m. that the green rockets were fired. The counter-attack was to be made on a wide frontage. In the centre was the 3rd Brigade, the attacking battalions of which were the 14th and 15th, with the 13th and the 16th in support. The objective was Hill 62. Farther north other battalions were to attack Sanctuary Wood and the position between Hill 62 and Hooge.

That was the plan, but the roads were so blocked with traffic and were being shelled so that it was impossible for the battalions to be in position by the time intended for the attack—2 a.m. The hours dragged on, and finally, when the rockets went up at 7 a.m., the attackers went over the parapets. The 14th Battalion, owing to the fact that the 15th were unable to attack before 8 a.m., went forward at the latter hour with the 15th. The two battalions linked up at Rudkin House. Before they reached the German line they were raked by heavy rifle and machine gun fire and heavily shelled. They gained five hundred yards; but their casualties were so great that they were forced to stop and dig in. They managed to hold the position all day.

In support, the 13th Battalion was receiving its share of the enemy shelling, which continued throughout the day. No fires could be lit for cooking, as the smoke would be seen. In the evening the companies altered their positions. No. 1 moved up to the position in the rear of Maple Copse, where the 14th Battalion had begun to dig. This position the company set to work to consolidate, as they were to occupy it for the next twenty-four hours. No. 2 company moved to Zillebeke village. No. 3 remained in reserve in the old positions, and No. 4 moved to Valley cottages. During these moves about fifty casualties were sustained, the enemy artillery fire being continuous. Captain Greenshields was instan-

taneously killed by a piece of shell hitting him on the head.

The next day was wet, and nothing could be done but keep under cover. No fires could be lit, and everyone was wet through. At night, patrols reconnoitred the enemy position, which was found to be strongly supported by artillery and machine guns. Early on the morning of the 5th the Germans began a violent bombardment, which lasted for over half an hour; and throughout the day they were very active along their whole front. Several large shells landed close to the trench in which No. 3 company was stationed, one knocking in a dugout and burying several men. While the artillery was pounding their positions the battalion was "standing to" ready to counter-attack; but headquarters decided that the moment for hitting back was not yet, and on the night of the 7th June the battalion was relieved.

The big counter-attack took place on June 12th; and then the 13th Battalion had its share of the fighting.

During the days prior to the blow the Canadians who were to take part trained for the occasion behind the lines. Lectures were delivered to the officers and by them to the men. The 13th Battalion spent the night of June 11th in the Fosse Way near Manor Farm. At 10.30 p.m. on June 12th they began their forward movement, and their first line went into the forward assembly trench, which was then garrisoned by men of the 2nd Battalion. The new front line was from Maple Copse on the left to Observation Ridge on the right, and the battalion was to attack the German positions as far back as the original Canadian front line from Vigo Street on the left to Observation Ridge Road on the right. This was to be the final objective.

The assault was timed to begin at 1.30 a.m., and the dispositions were completed by midnight. Rain fell almost continuously, the night was dark and cold, and the ground was muddy and slippery. But the light—just sufficient to enable the attackers to keep their direction and to distinguish friend from foe at close

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quarters—was favourable, while it shielded movements effectively.

The battalion went over in four successive waves, with an interval of thirty seconds between each wave. Major K. M. Perry commanded the first two waves, and Major G. E. McCuaig the other two. The first objective was the new enemy front line from Observation Ridge Road on the south up to and including Vigo street on the north—the line which had been so gallantly attacked by the 14th Battalion on the morning of the 3rd June. Upon reaching this line the first two waves were to halt and reorganise, one platoon to be left behind to clear the trenches of any remaining Germans and the remainder to press on to the second objective.

The second objective was our old reserve or “Montreal” line. When this point was gained the first two waves now united were to halt and the third and fourth waves were to pass over them and continue to the Winnipeg Line. This they were to consolidate rapidly, while a squad of bombers would continue to Vancouver Line, block the communication trenches leading to the old German line, and establish posts. When this was done a red flare was to notify the watchers in the rear that everything had gone well.

Every man carried 270 rounds of ammunition, two bombs, five sandbags, one day's rations, and every second man took a shovel to help in the consolidation work.

For three-quarters of an hour before the attackers climbed out of their trenches the German positions were deluged with every kind of shell. The German artillery replied and caused a number of casualties, but when the order to advance was given the four waves moved forward through the German barrage steadily and without flurry. The advance line found the enemy wire had been well cut by the bombardment, and, except in isolated places, the Germans were dazed and anxious to surrender. On the left of the advance, near Vigo Street, an enemy machine gun held up the advance for a short time till a party of bombers cut it off and silenced it and

the crew. Otherwise there was little obstruction. A number of the enemy were bayoneted, and the remainder surrendered in the front line.

At this point Major K. M. Perry was wounded, and the command was taken over by Major McCuaig. The enemy tried to rally, but they were soon dealt with, and the second and third objectives were reached and captured.

Lieut.-Col. Buchanan then sent forward an engineer party and a company of pioneers to lay out the lines for the new trench system, and work on this was carried on during the remainder of the day.

The prisoners taken included several Staff officers, and the booty included machine guns, bombs, a rifle battery, maps and correspondence. There were many German dead and wounded on the ground. The casualties of the 13th during the attack and the enemy bombardment which followed amounted in killed and wounded to twelve officers and 292 other ranks. The bombing and blocking parties were nearly all casualties. On the night of the 13th the battalion was relieved by the 2nd Canadian Battalion and went back to Patricia Lines, the men being allowed a full day's rest.

Between this fighting and the big efforts on the Somme in September the Canadians were not engaged in any big fighting. On September 1st they began to move southwards towards the long struggles which had already begun in the region before Albert and Bray. The 13th on the 2nd of September moved into support trenches at La Boiselle, occupying part of the old German trenches. On the following day (Sunday) the battalion, which was here co-operating with the 13th Australian Infantry Brigade, was ordered by Gen. Glasstorch of that Brigade to send forward two companies to Pozieres to support the Australians who were attacking Mouquet Farm. This was the introduction of the battalion into that region which the Germans had christened "the Blood-Baths of the Somme."

No. 1 and No. 2 companies, under Major Lovett and Major MacPherson respectively, went forward during the

morning. At 2 p.m. another call was made, and No. 3 company, under Major Peterman, went forward. Three hours later the remainder of the battalion also moved.

The first two companies held positions in the forward area and consolidated them. No. 1 company bombed the German communication trenches, and No. 2 company repelled a German attack. At 9 p.m. the entire battalion relieved the 52nd, 51st and 41st Australians. During the whole of the night the men were heavily shelled, and many were knocked out or buried by the upheavals. When day broke the shelling continued, and, later, the enemy made a determined counter-attack, but they were beaten back. On the 5th the shelling continued on both sides, and by this time our batteries had been ranged and were sending over two shells to every German one. In the evening of that day Nos. 1 and 2 companies were relieved by the 16th Battalion, the final relief of the whole battalion taking place on the night of the 7th, when they retired, worn out, to billets at Grande Mampis, Albert.

COURSELETTE.

There was little rest those days, however, for the Canadians were on the eve of one of their most memorable achievements—the attack and capture of all that remained of what had been the orchard village of Courcellette. The capture of this village—or what remained of it—was the greatest event in the fighting record of the Canadians during the year 1916. It was specially the work of the 2nd Division, so that the 13th Battalion did not figure in the operation in that sense. The attack was not an isolated action, but one carried out by certain battalions of the Canadian Corps in conjunction with an attack by the British and French troops in other sectors. There were really two distinct actions. The first was that carried out in the early morning of the 15th of September by the 4th and 6th Brigades, and the second was launched later the same day by the 5th Brigade. The object of the first was to seize

the famous Sugar trench and Sugar Factory which barred the way to the village. By seven o'clock in the evening the whole of Courcelette was in our hands.

KENORA AND REGINA TRENCHES.

The fighting which took place before the Canadian battalions ultimately captured the famous Regina Trench was of an entirely different kind to that by which they had taken Courcelette. In the latter case they had plucked their objective from the Germans in two sharp, swift engagements. In the former case they had to cut their way forward almost yard by yard, bombing and bayoneting as they went. The trenches came into the Canadian operations first on September 26th, 1916, when the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions made attacks on a frontage of about 3,000 yards.

The attack began at 12.35 p.m. on the 26th, the 14th and 15th Battalions, which took over the position of the 13th Battalion the previous day, advancing on the German positions, in conjunction with other battalions. The attackers did not all reach their objectives, and it was not till the following month that the positions were fully in Canadian hands.

An incident which clouded the fighting of this first attack was the tragedy of the loss of the battalion commander, Lieut.-Colonel Buchanan. The O.C. was in the battalion headquarters, when a German shell landed on the top of the shelter. A gasoline explosion followed the crash of the shell and resulted in the deaths of Lieut.-Colonel Buchanan, Major W. F. Peterman, Captain C. C. Green and eight other ranks, mostly runners and scouts on duty. Thirty-three other men were also wounded, most of them being burned by the flames from the gasoline.

On the night of the 26th Major G. E. McCuaig returned from leave and the following morning took over the command of the battalion. On the 28th the remains of Lieut.-Colonel Buchanan, Major Peterman, Captain Green and Lieut. Sale were buried with full military honours in the cemetery at Albert.

On October 8th the offensive against Regina Trench was resumed on a large scale, the 13th Battalion on that night taking over trenches north-east of Courcelette preparatory to making their attack. On this occasion the Canadian Corps attacked on a two Division frontage in conjunction with the 23rd and 25th British Divisions, the 1st Canadian Division being on the right and the 3rd Division on the left. Each Division had two brigades in the line. The battalions engaged, from right to left, were the 4th and 3rd of the 1st Brigade, the 16th and 18th of the 3rd Brigade, the 58th and 43rd of the 9th Brigade, and the Royal Canadian Rifles and the 49th of the 7th Brigade.

The attack had been rehearsed previously and began at 4.50 a.m. while it was still dark. The barrage opened with great intensity, and the enemy replied a minute later. The assaulting waves moved forward in good order, suffering only a few casualties on the way, but when they arrived at Regina Trench they found that the enemy wire was not cut by the artillery except on the extreme right of the attack.

While the men endeavoured to find gaps they were shot down rapidly by concentrated enemy machine guns from behind the trench and from Courcelette trench on the left. Only a few of the 13th men managed to get into the enemy position with some men of the 16th Battalion, and at length they were compelled to retire. Their casualties were heavy, for they had been in full view of enemy machine guns and snipers.

Out of seventeen officers who went forward, only two returned unwounded, and two others, who lay out in the German wire, came back after dark. The failure of this attack was attributed entirely to the fact that the wire had not been cut by the bombardment. On the following day the battalion returned to billets in Albert, and others, after terrible fighting, finally wrested the notorious trench from the enemy after nearly a month's struggle.

For some months afterwards the battalion endured the hard, ordinary work of the trenches without the

glamour of a spectacular action to relieve the monotony. Fighting, indeed, for all Canadian units died down for some time. There were the usual sniping excitements, trench raids, patrols, and periods in which training was undergone in the back areas. But it was not until the great smashing attack was delivered on Vimy Ridge that the good and lasting effects of those months of training were seen. It was essentially a Canadian victory.

THE TAKING OF VIMY RIDGE.

This was an operation which involved the co-operation of practically every Canadian unit, and the great victory was achieved on Easter Monday (April 9th), 1917.

For weeks there had been mighty efforts put forward behind the lines in order to get battalions and brigades and divisions working into a cohesive whole. They practised attack after attack over specially marked ground until every man was perfectly well aware of what was expected of him and how he was to carry out his part of the big job.

The position was perhaps the most important at that time on the whole battle-front. British and French armies had already tried to take it from the Germans, but had never met with the full measure of success. The slopes of the ridge were a maze of trenches of almost impregnable construction. Its dugouts could shelter entire battalions, and the diligent Germans had built almost perfect fortresses of machine guns. There was but one way to capture the ridge, and that was to smash its structures out of recognition and then seize it before the Germans had time to recover from the mighty blow. That was the plan which the leaders adopted, and it worked well and successfully.

The strength of the 13th Battalion taking part in the operation was approximately twenty-five officers and 760 other ranks. A reserve of about seventeen officers and 264 other ranks was kept back at Bois des

Alleux Huts, in case of emergency. The march to the trenches was made on the night before the attack, the route being marked by posts painted with luminous paint.

Five hours before "zero" time the battalion was in position. The plans of the operation placed the battalion in reserve, so that the men did not at the time realise exactly how matters were progressing ahead. But for the other battalions the 13th maintained communication with the brigade, and during the whole action were more or less a report centre.

At 1.30 a.m. on that famous morning, in a mixture of recurrent rain and sleet, the companies reported their men in position. At 4 a.m. an issue of rum was made. Hot soup had been provided, but the cookhouse of three companies was shelled, three cooks killed, and most of the soup lost.

At "zero" hour (5.30 a.m.) the advance began behind the heavy barrage, the attacking waves making their way across No Man's Land in the wake of the screaming shells.

Practically every section of the attacking troops kept schedule time. They met with no very great opposition, for the Germans were completely overwhelmed by the tornado of steel which had been rained upon them. It was at the second line that the Germans tried to put up a fight from nests of machine guns, tucked away in their concrete fortresses. This opposition was overcome, and in record time Vimy Ridge was in the possession of the Canadians.

On the following day, when the Germans began to shell spitefully, the 13th Battalion supplied parties to help clean up the battlefield and make roads to enable the artillery to bring up their guns. About 5 p.m. the battalion moved to a position in the old British front line trench, with headquarters at Post de Lille. The work of salvage continued in various parts of the battle front for some days, and on the 17th the battalion took up positions in Farbus Wood, where the men got into some of the old German dugouts and the gunners turned

some of the German guns, taken in the wood, on to their previous owners.

During the whole of that day the enemy fire was intense, their shells continuously landing in the wood; but gradually the ferocity of the battle died down. Until the 26th the battalion continued to clean up the area and repair the shattered dugouts and shelters, but at last, on that date, the order came for the men to move to Pendu Huts, after having spent seventeen days within reach of shell fire.

For several months after Vimy Ridge battle the actions of the battalion were confined to the usual trench tours, with their minor excitements.

THE TAKING OF HILL 70.

We now come to the last important operation which may be mentioned in this short story of the 13th Battalion, namely, the taking of Hill 70. The official War Office statement of that deed compresses the action into the following few words, which mark a milestone in the fighting record of Canadian troops.

August 15th, 1917.

At 4.25 a.m. this morning Canadian troops stormed the German positions south-east and east of Loos, on a front of two miles.

The formidable defences of Hill 70, which resisted attacks in the battle of Loos in September, 1915, and have since been improved and strengthened by every method and device known to our enemies, were carried by assault. After storming the enemy's first trench system on the whole front attacked, our troops advanced as far as the western defences of Cite St. Auguste, penetrating the German positions to a depth of about a mile.

Besides the elaborate series of trench lines and strong points forming the defences of Hill 70, the villages of Cite St. Elizabeth, Cite St. Emille, and

Cite St. Laurent, as well as Bois Rae and the western half of Bois Hugo, are now in our possession.

All objectives captured. Our casualties were slight.

The attack was carried out by two Divisions, and began at 4.25 a.m., the 13th Battalion being in the centre of the 3rd Brigade with the 16th Battalion on the right, the 15th Battalion on the left, and the 14th in support. Every man was in position in the jumping-off trenches by 2.40 a.m. Precisely at 4.25 a.m. our machine gun barrage opened, followed five seconds later by the artillery. In the wake of the artillery went the waves of men across No Man's Land in perfect formation. There was no fighting in the German front line system, and the number of prisoners here taken by the 13th was only about 25.

"C" Company, on the right, had gone a little too far to their left, and Captain Bennett, who was in command, had been killed by a bursting shell. Major Mathewson, commanding "B" Company, then took charge of "C" and led them to their second and final objective, Hugo trench. By 6.10 a.m. reports had been received from all the companies that the objectives had been reached and were being consolidated.

Shortly afterwards the assaulting troops for the remainder of the objectives passed through, and the attack was resumed. Hill 70 was carried by assault, and less than an hour later the whole of the objectives were in our hands.

The Germans attempted several counter-attacks, but were driven back on every occasion and the positions were held. The casualties inflicted on the enemy, both in the attack itself and in the minor operations which followed, were exceptionally heavy. The entire number of prisoners taken by the Canadians was 1,378, with a large number of machine guns and trench mortars. Four German Divisions had been put out of action, and despite the enemy assertions to the contrary, the casualties incurred by our troops were light.

In the 13th Battalion the losses were one officer killed

and seven wounded, and 34 other ranks killed, 34 missing, and 186 wounded.

The battalion was relieved in the early morning of the 17th and went back to billets in Les Brebis.

Three days later the brigade was inspected by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, when he expressed his "great gratification at all he had seen and his pride in the achievements of the 1st Canadian Division."



